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SUBJECT: KENYA ELECTIONS: Presidential Candidate
Kalonzo Musyoka on the Elections

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Classified by PolCouns Larry Andre for reasons 1.4 B & D.

¶1. (C) Summary. Kalonzo Musyoka, one of the three principal presidential candidates, recently laid out to the Ambassador his campaign strategy and views on the upcoming elections. The bottom line is that Musyoka realizes he has no chance to win the election this round and sees his campaign as a prelude to running again for president in 2012 -- but at that time with support of the dominant Kikuyu community. This means that Musyoka will support President Kibaki if it looks like he will win the election and be prepared to tilt the balance after the election through participation in a coalition government. End summary.

¶2. (U) At a private lunch with the Ambassador recently, Kalonzo Musyoka, one of the three principal presidential candidates (representing the Orange Democratic Movement of Kenya - ODM-K), discussed his campaign and the upcoming elections.

¶3. (C) Musyoka, who has consistently polled in either single digits or barely above that, opened with his version of the "hail mary pass." Musyoka expressed concerns about the health of President Kibaki and the negative impact on the electoral process should Kibaki experience a health crisis before the elections. Musyoka seriously suggested that President Bush should call Kibaki to urge him to step aside. If Kibaki were to pull out, Musyoka contended, he would receive much of the support Kibaki had received (based on the traditional close ties between Kibaki's Kikuyu community and Musyoka's much smaller Kamba community).

¶4. (C) The Ambassador pressed Musyoka on his strategy for the electoral campaign. Musyoka offered nothing concrete, instead focusing on a litany of complaints about Kibaki and the other main presidential aspirant, Raila Odinga (ODM). He claimed that, if elected, Odinga would become "another Chavez" because he was heavily influenced by socialism during his studies as a teenager in East Germany. He also argued that the election of Odinga would lead to substantial instability fomented by Kibaki's ethnic Kikuyu supporters. The youth, Musyoka said, believe that an Odinga victory would be a "revolution" (in the sense of dramatic action against corruption and improvement in social services and other areas) and will be impatient for results. Musyoka condemned Odinga's rumored secret deal with the Muslim community not to support strong anti-terrorism measures if he were elected. Musyoka also echoed the claims of

many others that Odinga's touting of "majimbo-ism" is irresponsible and dangerous because it is fanning tribalist sentiments. (Note: In its populist version, Majimbo-ism means extreme federalism verging on local autonomy with ethnic exclusivism. Musyoka is campaigning on a platform of "economic Majimbo," emphasizing fair distribution of national resources, but not outright federalism. Kibaki has publicly opposed majimbo, arguing instead for a strong central government, but with additional resources made available to the regions for local priorities (soft devolution). END Note.)

¶ 15. (C) As the conversation developed, it became clear that Musyoka sees himself in the pivotal role of spoiler/kingmaker. Having broken with Odinga on bitter terms, he sees no possibility of working with him. He will focus on trying to beat Odinga in critical Rift Valley Province. He believes that historic ties between the Rift Valley's Kalenjin community and his Kamba community will enable him to do so. (Note: Former President Moi's armed forces chief of staff, a Kamba, was instrumental in helping Moi, a Kalenjin, put down the 1982 attempted coup which Odinga reportedly supported. End Note.)

¶ 16. (C) On the other hand, "Kibaki will need to form a coalition government if he is elected, and I am ready to participate," Musyoka declared. He then stated flatly that Kenya would clearly be better off with Kibaki for another five-year term, than with Odinga, as President. Asked the possibility of switching to support Kibaki before the elections, Musyoka replied that doing so would amount to political suicide for him, a verdict we have heard from others as well. However, when the Ambassador raised the hypothetical scenario of Kibaki offering Musyoka the promise of the vice president's slot if elected, Musyoka did not deny that this could influence him to shift to support of Kibaki before the elections. (Note: While Musyoka can declare support for Kibaki at

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any time, he can only formally switch sides before November 15, though this date has been postponed once and may be again. By this date, each party must turn in its presidential nomination papers to the Electoral Commission in preparation for the printing of the ballots. End Note.)

¶ 17. (C) Discussing a possible alliance with Kibaki led to Musyoka's elaborating on his future political prospects. Musyoka, who is 56, conceded that he is also focused on mounting a presidential campaign for the 2012 elections. He said that the heir apparent of the Kikuyu community - Uhuru Kenyatta - has tentatively agreed to run as Vice President on a 2012 Musyoka ticket. (Comment: Obtaining this sort of Kikuyu support for 2012 would require Musyoka to be supportive of Kibaki now - switching support before the election, or tilting the balance in a coalition government following the elections. If Kenyatta has truly agreed to serve as Musyoka's running mate in 2012, this would be due to a calculation that the majority of the Kenyan electorate would not accept a Kikuyu President (Kibaki) being followed immediately by another Kikuyu President (Kenyatta), requiring Kenyatta to bide his time during a Musyoka interregnum. End Comment.)

¶ 18. (C) Comment. Though Musyoka presents himself as a born-again Christian with the purest of political intentions, keen observers see Musyoka as largely an opportunist interested primarily in advancing his political ambitions. Musyoka served under Moi and Kibaki in ministerial positions. The traditionally close Kikuyu-Kamba relationship and his antipathy towards Odinga make almost inevitable some sort of accommodation with the Kibaki camp. How Musyoka calibrates that will

depend on his reading of Kibaki's prospects for re-election. He could still choose to shift support to Kibaki before the ballots are printed, probably ensuring a Kibaki win, but there remains very little time for him to do so. He could stay in the race, but modulate his campaign to position himself to support a coalition government if it looks like Kibaki will win, but without a stable parliamentary majority. On the other hand, he could maintain a staunchly independent campaign and go down to honorable defeat (and stay alive for 2012) if it looks like Kibaki will lose. Though Musyoka is polished and glib, some astute observers consider him an intellectual lightweight. Thus far he has not presented a credible national political agenda.

RANNEBERGER